DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 098 936 IR 001 312

AUTHOR Eaton, Deborah A.
TITLE Role of the Special Librarian in a Federal Natural Resources Research Laboratory.
INSTITUTION Fish and Wildlife Service (Dept. of Interior), Denver, Colo. Wildlife Research Center.
PUB DATE 11 Jun 74
NOTE 8p.; Paper presented at the Special Library Association Annual Meeting (65th, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, June 9-13, 1974)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.75 HC-$1.50 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS Government Libraries; Information Sources; Librarians; Library Collections; Library Cooperation; Library Services; *Research Libraries; *Special Libraries
IDENTIFIERS Wildlife Research Center

ABSTRACT

The function of a Federal research library reflects the purpose of the laboratory it serves and the philosophy of the librarian. Libraries at the Fish and Wildlife Service research centers must rely on small specialized collections, supplemented by a large amount of cooperation among agency libraries and other subject-related collections. Due to personnel, funding, and space limitations, the conscientious librarian must serve his research staff by coordinating the resources of his own and other libraries, as well as being familiar with data bases and other specialized information resources that complement his collection. Each library is funded through the research center budget and is locally administered. In the end, however, it is the philosophy and goals that the librarian sets for himself and his library that are responsible for the success and relevance of the library services. (Author)

ED 098936

IR

THE ROLE OF THE SPECIAL LIBRARIAN IN A FEDERAL NATURAL RESOURCES RESEARCH LIBRARY*

Deborah A. Eaton, Librarian
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Wildlife Research Center
Denver, Colorado

ABSTRACT

The function of a Federal research library reflects the purpose of the laboratory it serves and the philosophy of the librarian. Libraries at the Fish and Wildlife Service research centers must rely on small specialized collections, supplemented by a large amount of cooperation among agency libraries and other subject-related collections. Due to personnel, funding, and space limitations, the conscientious librarian must serve his research staff by coordinating the resources of his own and other libraries, as well as being familiar with data bases and other specialized information resources that complement his collection. Each library is funded through the research center budget and is locally administered. In the end, however, it is the philosophy and goals that the librarian sets for himself and his library that are responsible for the success and relevance of the library services.

---

* Presented at the Special Libraries Association, 65th Conference, Four Seasons-Sheraton Hotel, Toronto, Ontario, June 11, 1974.

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

IR001 312

As Librarian for the Wildlife Research Center for the past several years, I have found myself developing a theory as to my role and the role of the library. Upon trying to write down my ideas, I have divided them into two general areas: the function of the libriarian in relation to the Center, and my philosophy of the librarian. Since figures provide a means of comparing collections, I have developed some for the library.

I operate one of seven libraries working within the Division of Research, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Within this network of collections there is a desperate amount of cooperation. Each librarian functions to complement the role of his laboratory, and each receives a budget from his Center. Not one faces the problem of an abundance of money, and many are faced with a space problem. Among other similarities for which we are all thankful are: franked mail (our budgeting does not concern itself with mailing costs); the Federal telephone system (which occasionally doesn't work, but still is an available, inexpensive means of communication), and a reasonably close Federal library community. The Federal community, which is visible on an agency level, such as U.S. Department of the Interior, is also an underground group which functions on the basis of common subject areas. So that we in both Fish Research Laboratories and Wildlife Research Laboratories have much to be thankful for and many resources available for our needs.

The Wildlife Research Center provides an example of what other research center libraries may be like. Library staff consists of one full-time professional, one high school student (15 hours a week) and one-tenth of a secretary (used mainly for correspondence). Although the history of the

Center can be traced back to the era of "gopher chokers" and the USDA Biological Survey, the library is a relatively new concept. The Center has been part of the Interior Department since 1940, and the number of staff and size of field stations has increased considerably. In 1968, the Director of the Center decided a librarian was necessary to create and maintain a library. As of 1974, our Center staff consists of 100 professional researchers in such areas as pharmacology, animal behavior, chemistry, and wildlife biology. We have 21 field stations with various-sized staffs. Some of them are one-man stations, and some have staffs as large as five. The geographical distribution reaches from Mammoth Cave, Kentucky, to Kenai, Alaska, and from Cali, Colombia, to Los Baños, the Philippines.

Upon measuring, I have determined that we have 708 linear feet of stacks and shelving areas, including shelf space in my office. We have approximately 2,500 cataloged books and monographs in Denver, 500 uncataloged, and probably another 500 at field stations. We receive 275 periodical titles, and a few irregular serials. We have a large library reprint file, 600 of which are classified in a uniterm system. There are potentially several thousand more titles which could be added, time permitting. We subscribe to Biological Abstracts and Chemical Abstracts, which account for much money and shelf-space. The Director allots the library an annual budget (fiscal year July-June) of $10,000, not to include salaries. As a formality, for his information, I submit an itemized justification to indicate amounts spent on books, subscriptions, travel, binding, etc.

The subject areas of the collection, by necessity, supplement ongoing research at the Center and reflect former areas of interest. Since there are several extensive natural resource libraries in the Denver area, I rely heavily on them (and their funding) to purchase many of the peripheral titles, which I do not use often enough to buy, or are too expensive to justify.

Among the major blessings locally are the Fish and Wildlife Reference Service (a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Reference Service contractor run by Barb Wagner), the Conservation Library (located in the Denver Public Library), and Colorado State University Library (75 miles away in Fort Collins), which has an extensive fish and wildlife collection. Books and journals concentrate on a variety of areas, with emphasis on animal behavior, chemistry, mammalogy, ornithology, pesticides, pharmacology, statistics, and wildlife biology.

Upon keeping some statistics and keeping track of my time, I have developed a philosophy which explains my impressions of the role of the library and librarian within the research center. My goals are to maintain and build a relevant collection, available to all researchers at the Center and reflecting the demands of their research, and to have the collection utilized. As a librarian, I have found the following ideas to be pertinent to my goals:

1. Know your agency, personnel, publications, and policies. This awareness naturally starts on the local (in my case, the Center) level.

2. Volunteer for anything at your Center which you feel will be good for library public relations. (1) Anything you can do to "sell"

your library and its services is worth your time. I would consider such activities as giving seminars to my users as part of this volunteering. In many cases, researchers need to be oriented as to what a library is and what it does. The most capable person to accomplish this task is the librarian. Rubenstien theorizes that "if researchers could be trained in the efficient use of information systems and services, existing systems and services could function more effectively." (2) An effective method of having your collection used is to explain to one's users what is available and suggest ways of using it. (3)

3. Realize that few in your organization care how you function, as long as you can satisfy their needs. My supervisor (the Center Director) has declared to me, and to many other librarians, that he knows little about running a library. He feels his functions are not to know how it works, but to act as a supportive supervisor. (4) I am fortunate that he recognizes and fulfills my needs by defining space, funds, and priorities, and even more importantly, he recognizes my capacities as a professional member of the staff and does not oversupervise. (5)

4. Make contacts. There is no limit as to how valuable communication can be. The person-to-person flow of information cannot be measured, but it should never be underestimated. (6) This resource has no limit in scope. An awareness of reprint collections in a biologist's office has equal value to a government documents librarian. Reassure your contacts that you expect them to use you the way you use them.

5. Regard your relationship with a library user as a team effort. To establish the idea that you can guide a researcher to the literature

is a vital necessity. Making him aware that his expertise in evaluating the biological worth of literature is a necessity, in turn establishes the librarian as an expert in information retrieval, rather than a book duster and photocopier.

6. The team premise brings me to the most important part of my philosophy: Act like an intelligent professional. Realize your own capabilities and knowledge, and learn to relate to your researchers. This idea relies on the individual librarian doing several other things: reading and scanning subject-area journals, books and library publications; being a good listener; writing (even annual reports provide a new perspective); and most of all, getting out of your library. The latter can be for innumerable reasons, such as interlibrary loans, visiting other librarians and libraries, and attending professional meetings (subject area meetings can be as stimulating as information science meetings). Being near a city will facilitate getting to other libraries, but even the effort of crossing the street can be worthwhile. Adjust your supervisor and staff to this procedure by making an example of yourself. Write a paragraph for a monthly narrative to make them aware of where you have been and what you have accomplished.

7. Get to know all you can about automation. Experiment with whatever is available and discover what is available. Even if you do not have a terminal in your Center, it is worth your while to locate one somewhere else. Library users for some reason are impressed with automation. Librarians should be familiar enough with data processing to answer a user's questions. Spending time discovering new retrieval systems

and informing researchers is a potential method of establishing their addiction to the library. The librarian's continuing education is a worthwhile adventure.

8. Finally, treat your user as if he is the only person you are working for. Spoon feed him--create a mental or written profile of his subject interests. Send him abstracts of new relevant publications. Talk to him about his research. Notify him of new books. Make him aware that he cannot survive without the library, much less carry on research without using the library.

Being an effective librarian and running a library can be a challenge. But in conclusion, it is the attitudes, goals, and ideas of the individual librarian which are responsible for the success and relevance of the library. It is the librarian who takes his collection beyond the realm of "the place where the books are kept" to "the place where the information can be found."

BIBLIOGRAPHY

(1) Schnick, R. A. Everything you always wanted to know about librarians, but were afraid to ask. In Proceedings of the 1973 Second Annual Federal Interagency Field Librarians Workshop. Denver, Government Printing Office, 1974. pp. 125-128.

(2) Rubenstein, A. H., and others. Search versus experiment. College and Research Libraries 34(4):280-286. (1974)

(3) Schneiderman, M. Librarians as environmental activists. In G. S. Bonn, ed. Information Resources in the Environmental Sciences. Champaign-Urbana, University of Illinois. 1973.

(4) Scott, T. G. An administrator's view of the special library. In Proceedings of the 1973 Second Annual Federal Interagency Field Librarians Workshop. Denver, Government Printing Office, 1974. pp. 129-133.

(5) Ibid p. 129.

(6) Dosa, M. L. An integrating approach to environmental information. Special Libraries 65(4):189-193. (1974).